

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Stickney School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007**

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 24, 2006

Date of Report: December 8, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Needs Improvement The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.

Out of Compliance The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not applicable In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Screening data
- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- Referral form
- State tables A, D, E, F, G, H
- Suspension and expulsion data

- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher certificates
- Meeting date documentation

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the district consistently provides professional development to district staff. On February 9, 2006 the district invited Julie Briggs from Parent Connections to come and visit with the staff. She informed the entire staff on the services they provide, what Parent Connections does, and answered many questions. Stickney has asked her to return in the fall to have a teacher in-service focusing on attention-deficit behaviors. Julie is also willing to stay longer and have a parent meeting in the early evening.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that Stickney meets requirements for child find based on child find numbers, strategies for advertising and referrals. Stickney goes an extra step when announcing child find activities as the elementary principal sends screening information to each of the three daycare providers in town to distribute to each family. The district notes it appears that the screenings numbers are quite small, but the community is as well. Last fall twelve children attended the screening activity. The district conducts staff meeting when a teacher or parent bring concerns regarding a student. Stickney has not refused any parent referrals. Referral forms are in all reviewed files.

The steering committee determined that the district does not have any students in private schools, out of district placements or students who have been expelled or suspended. Should the need arise the district has policies and procedures in place to address these issues in the special education comprehensive plan.

The steering committee concludes the district uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyze school district-level data to determine if the school district is making progress toward the state performance goals and indicators. The guidance counselor distributes student item analysis reports to teachers. Stickney also has had teams attending local data retreats for the last five years. The team has teacher in-service time to report the information to the rest of the staff. The staff sets their own goals to work toward improvement of the scores.

The steering committee concluded the district implements procedures to determine personnel development needs and take appropriate action to meet those identified needs. The district special education teacher is certified and there is documentation of supervision. The team also concluded the special education teacher does a good job of reviewing special education laws and procedures to staff.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to invite parents to in-services.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through interview with staff, the monitoring committee validates the steering committee finding under general supervision as a promising practice. The district had a speaker from Parent Connection speak to all district staff in February 2006 then organized the same speaker to return in September 2006 for a parent presentation. The district is also in the process of setting up future speakers for district staff and parents. Providing professional development which is open to parents is a relatively new concept for the district and the district continues to encourage parent involvement.

Meets requirements

Through interview with staff the monitoring team validates the steering committee findings as meeting requirements under general supervision. This includes professional development for district staff, child find activities and ensuring student progress toward state goals and indicators. The district has provided and continues to provide professional training for staff, including student specific training. The district child find activities for birth to preschool screenings are provided one time per year. The elementary principal puts the notice in the local newspaper and sends flyers to all day care providers in the area in an attempt to reach all parents in the district. The district participates in data retreats in order to make data-based decisions in regard to professional and curriculum development.

Needs improvement

Through interview with staff the monitoring team cannot validate the steering committee finding under general supervision as needing improvement. As a result of the steering committee's findings in the spring of 2006, the district has started providing training to parents within the district. One was provided in September 2006 and future trainings are being organized.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Table I
- Suspension and expulsion table
- Student file reviews
- Special education checklist/concern sheet

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district provides a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. This is based on the parent surveys and file reviews. The students who qualify for extended school year and live out of city limits are paid mileage.

There have been no suspensions or expulsions from school for students with disabilities. The district has policies and the procedures written in the comprehensive plan to address the procedures in case the need should arise

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring concurs with the steering committee findings under free appropriate public education. The district provides a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Prior notice form
- Table A
- Telephone documentation
- Evaluation report
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee determined the district ensures evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet minimum requirements resulting in proper identification of students with disabilities. This conclusion is based on file reviews. The team feels good functional assessment has been collected. The special education teacher has used the Brigance evaluation tool to help determine good functional performance.

Needs improvement

The steering team concluded the district needs improvement the area of functional evaluation. The district will consider providing further training on functional assessment to all staff. Functional information obtained appears to be clear and strong but linking the information to the present level of performance to goals does

need improvement. The district also wants to ensure the functional assessment is included in the evaluation report itself instead of noting the functional assessment is attached.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings as meeting requirements under appropriate evaluation. In seven of the seven files reviewed the district conducted a comprehensive evaluation as part of the process to determine if the student was eligible for special education services under South Dakota criteria. In three of the seven files a reevaluation was conducted within the past year, the district gathered functional information as part of the evaluation process and the results were summarized in a report form.

In these three files there was a clear link between the assessment results, the present level of performance and the goals that were developed in the individualized education program. The functional assessment and the transition evaluation results were included in the school psychologist report, making it a convenient package for the parent. Therefore, the monitoring team could not validate the steering committee finding that the district needs to improve in linking functional results to present level of performance and goals and ensuring all evaluation results are part of the evaluation report because the district has already made these improvements.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Parent rights brochure
- Student files
- Types and locations sheet
- Comprehensive plan

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the district ensures parents are informed of their parental rights. New parents to the program are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Your Child Your Rights”. This video is located in the special education room.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concludes that federal and state requirements are met under procedural safeguards based on file reviews and a review of the parental rights brochure. Parents have been informed that they can inspect and review their child's records. Parents are fully informed of their rights. The district also has on file a list of surrogate parents and they have been made aware of their rights and responsibilities. The district policies and procedures are in place to respond to due process requests; even though the district has not has any due process requests.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through interview the monitoring team cannot validate the steering committee finding under procedural safeguards as a promising practice. The district reports the use of the video entitled "Your Child Your Rights" is very much appropriated (Do you mean appreciated?) by the parents. But it is the responsibility of the school district to ensure the parent is aware of and understands their rights.

Meets requirements

Through interview and file review the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards. Parents are consistently afforded their rights in that the district consistently provides them a copy of the rights, parents are informed of the agenda for each meeting through written notice and parental consent is obtained prior to evaluation.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- Student surveys
- Prior notice form
- File reviews

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements under Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The district provides written prior notice for all meetings, there is appropriate team membership at all meetings, the Individualized Education program plan contains all required content, and transition is addressed for high school students. According to the positive parent surveys and file reviews the Individualized Education Program team consistently develops an appropriate IEP for each eligible child.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district does not consistently link the functional assessment information to the present levels of performance page and then to the goals. The present levels of performance page does not contain the specific skills information from the functional assessment.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team validates many of the steering committee findings under meets requirement. Prior notice for meetings are consistently provided, there is appropriate team membership at all meetings, individualized education programs are consistently reviewed on an annual basis and transition is consistently addressed for students by their 16th birthday.

The monitoring team could not validate the steering committee finding as needs improvement under Individualized Education Program. Through file review the monitoring team consistently found strengths and needs listed on the present level of performance linked to functional assessment and to the goals the team developed as part the individualized education program.

Out of compliance: Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include: (1) A statement of the student's present levels of educational performance, including: (a) How the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled students);

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02. Development, review, and revision of individualized education program. In developing, reviewing, and revising each student's individualized education program, the team shall consider the strengths of the student and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their student.

Through file review the monitoring team determined the district does not consistently document all required content in the Individualized Education Program. In files two and three the district did not document how the student's disability affects their performance in the general curriculum and parent input on the present level of performance.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables I, F
- File reviews
- Surveys

Promising practice

The steering committee determined the district ensures all student needs are served in the least restrictive environment. The students with a disability have the opportunity to participate in all things, just as their peers. All students in grades 2-12 have the option of participating in the "Prairie Readers" program. They read books on their own, possibly at home with family and become part of the class team. The team practices with an adult at school (usually their teacher or an aide) on reviewing, summarizing, and asking detailed questions about that book. Then in April those teams travel to a competition for an afternoon where they take turns answering questions against other schools in that grade level. Another LRE example is the first and second grade students are paired up with "Reading Buddies" from the 7th grade class each week. The 7th grade spends half an hour listening and helping the younger students read. The teacher pairs up the students into small groups, with the reading groups being different each week. The students with disabilities have been a part of this as well.

The last example involves the high school students. All students have the elective of choosing Family and Consumer Science (FACS) courses each year of high school. Each class is a "Sunshine Pal". The FACS teacher has done a wonderful job of not only involving all students (as she has worked with many students with disabilities) but also involves the elderly in the community. Each student in each class is paired up with an elderly person who has volunteered and agreed to be part of the program. The students visit the elderly during FACS class two times a month. The students have an "agenda" to assist them in the conversation. After the visit the students return to school and their homework is to write about their experience in their own "Sunshine Pal" journal. This program goes on throughout the entire school year. In May the teacher plans a "Sunshine Pal Tea" where all students and elderly participants gather in one place together and have lunch and tea. The school has had many positive comments from the elderly and the community on this project. This project has been done for one year and the teacher plans to continue.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district ensures students receive their services in the least restrictive environment with the necessary supports. Stickney School District is improving on keeping students in the regular classroom with their peers. Currently seven of the nine students identified as a student with a disability are being served in the regular classroom.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through staff interview and observation the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings as a promising practice under least restrictive environment. The district provides a variety of opportunities and options for students with disabilities to participate with their peers in a meaningful way. In addition to the steering committee's description of the various programs stated above the district has also included all students and their parents when informing them of the state requirements for graduation as part of transition planning for all students in the district. The school counselor ensures all 8th grade students participate in this Freshman Orientation. This orientation is an afternoon program which is open to all parents of freshman. The counselor covers the following topics: Graduation requirement, entrance requirements for colleges and vocational technical schools, classes needed to a four year college, scholarships, grade point average and class ranking.

Meets requirements

Through file review and observation the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee finding as meeting requirement under least restrictive environment. The district does ensure students are served in the least restrictive environment.